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ABSTRACT

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act seeks to improve student achievement through high expectations for all; increase parent and community involvement in education; make schools safe, drug-free, and disciplined; upgrade teacher training and professional development; bring technology into the schools; support long-term and systemwide efforts; and tailor improvements to the needs of communities and states. The Goals 2000 Act reaffirms that the responsibility for control of education is reserved to the states and local school systems. This brochure outlines the major goals of the act and outlines what Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do. (LMI)

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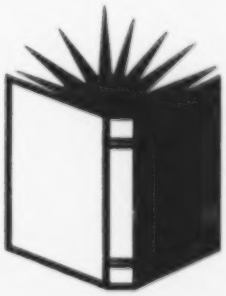

The GOALS 2000 Act Supporting Community Efforts to Improve Schools

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Reaching Challenging Goals and High Standards

In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* sent alarming signals across America that our nation's public schools were not preparing our youth for the changing times. Since then, many state and local leaders have been engaged in school reform and have learned a great deal about improving student achievement. These experiences have shaped the principles underlying the Goals 2000: Educate America Act—the need for high expectations for students; full participation by parents, educators and communities in education; safe and disciplined learning environments; quality teaching and professional development; the effective use of technology in learning; long-term systemwide improvement efforts; and communities and states custom-making school improvement efforts to meet their needs.

Goals 2000 has drawn broad support from parents, and representatives of the business community, governors, teachers, school administrators, state legislators, school boards, state school superintendents, and leaders from both major political parties.

The Act recognizes that there is no simple or cookie cutter approach to improving education. It supports a wide array of state and local approaches to raise academic achievement, and to provide a safe, disciplined learning environment for all children. **The Goals 2000 Act "reaffirms that the responsibility for control of education is reserved to the states and local school systems."**

Major Directions of Goals 2000:

IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT—HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL

What we've learned: We've learned that children often meet expectations set for them. U.S. Education Secretary—and former South Carolina Governor—Richard Riley cites the urgent need for "ending the tyranny of low expectations" that is blocking the progress of many of our students.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: States and communities are being asked to make their own high expectations concrete by establishing standards for what children should learn and know how to do. These standards would be in core academic subjects, such as math, science and English. Voluntary national academic standards can be used as models of academic excellence to help set challenging learning standards.

INCREASING PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

What we've learned: Family involvement is critical to achieving a high-quality education and a safe, disciplined learning environment for every student. Students simply achieve more when there is meaningful parental and community involvement in learning. The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: The Goals 2000 Act encourages the building of strong family-school partnerships for learning. Schools need to open their doors for parental and community involvement in the design and implementation of school improvement efforts. At the state and local level, broad-based panels will develop and oversee the implementation of improvement efforts, including strategies to strengthen parental involvement in learning.

Finally, Goals 2000 authorizes the creation of parent resource centers to support strong and effective parental involvement.

MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE, DRUG-FREE AND DISCIPLINED

What we've learned: Students learn better when they are in schools where they feel safe. Greater emphasis must be placed on establishing safe, disciplined environments where teachers can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: States and communities can address ways to make schools safe, drug-free, and more disciplined as part of their improvement efforts. In addition, Title VII of Goals 2000, entitled the Safe Schools Act, authorizes the Secretary of Education to award competitive grants to school districts to help them reduce violence. These funds can support activities ranging from the installation of metal detectors to comprehensive violence prevention efforts, which might include mentoring programs and the training of school personnel in conflict resolution.

Related activities could also be supported by the crime prevention authority in the 1994 crime bill. This bill provides substantial new funds for community and school efforts to prevent and reduce violence.

UPGRADING TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What we've learned: Improving student achievement depends on the ability of teachers to teach challenging subject matter to all students, and to manage effectively an orderly learning environment. Prospective and current teachers need sustained and meaningful opportunities to learn how to do these things well.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: Participating states will develop a competitive grant process to award at least 60 percent of Goals 2000 funds in the first year—and at least 90 percent in subsequent years—to school districts for the development of reform plans, *and* for improving professional development opportunities for prospective and current teachers. Subgrants for professional development will be awarded by the state to school districts working with institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations.

BRINGING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE SCHOOLS

What we've learned: The use of educational technologies—including computers in the classroom—can improve student achievement, support professional development, and increase the learning resources available to our students. In the information age, students must be prepared to use computers and other technology in school and beyond.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: Goals 2000 funds can be used by states to integrate technology into their school improvement efforts. Goals 2000 also creates an Office of Educational Technology within the Department of Education, charged with supporting state and local efforts to bring technology into the classrooms.

SUPPORTING LONG-TERM AND SYSTEMWIDE EFFORTS

What we've learned: Improving schools involves intensive and long-term effort. Moreover, success depends on all parts of an educational system working together to help all children reach challenging academic standards. Reforms are less likely to lead to gains in student achievement when focus is placed only on one piece of an educational system, rather than on all pieces and how they fit together. A piecemeal approach, for example, might focus on professional development or educational technology without looking at challenging standards for what communities want their children to learn, or rigorous assessments of learning.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: At the heart of Goals 2000 is the grant program for the development and implementation of long-term comprehensive school improvements. Participating states and communities are being supported in their efforts to set high academic standards and goals, and improve all aspects of education to reinforce the achievement of these standards and goals—including parent involvement, the use of better assessments, professional development, technology, and the effective use of related education and training initiatives to improve student achievement.

COMMUNITIES, STATES TAILORING IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR NEEDS

What we've learned: Improvements in education are most likely to take place when schools, districts, and states have the flexibility and support needed to custom-make their own strategies to improve student achievement. This approach is particularly effective when new flexibility is coupled with accountability for results.

This lesson highlights the need for a new role of government at all levels—one that focuses on removing unnecessary barriers to improvement, and supporting those closest to the classroom and community as they work to improve their schools.

What Goals 2000 helps states and communities to do: Under Goals 2000, the focus of government shifts from rules and compliance toward flexibility and support for high student achievement and accountability for results. Moreover, Goals 2000 provides support for communities and states to custom-make their own improvement efforts to meet their own needs. The two-page Goals 2000 application and the absence of any regulations associated with the Goals 2000 plans are important—and unprecedented—manifestations of this flexible and supportive approach.

The Goals 2000 Act provides new waiver authority to the Secretary of Education to cut through federal red tape in education. Once a state reform plan is approved, the state may ask the Secretary to waive requirements of certain federal education programs that the state has determined impede the implementation of state or local plans. Schools and school districts may also submit waiver requests to the Secretary through their state agency.

In addition, six states will be selected for participation in an education flexibility demonstration program. This provision authorizes the Secretary to *delegate* his waiver authority to state educational agencies.

Helping to Reach the National Education Goals

In 1989, six national education goals were agreed on by President Bush and the Nation's governors, with leadership from then-Governor Bill Clinton. The 1994 Goals 2000 Act formalizes in law these six goals and adds two goals on teacher training and parental involvement. These goals can serve as a lighthouse for communities and states in their efforts to improve education. The Goals are: By the year 2000. . .

School readiness. All children in America will start school ready to learn.

Increased graduation rate. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Improved student achievement. All students in America will be competent in the core academic subjects.

Best in Math and Science. U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science.

Adult literacy and lifelong learning. Every adult American will be literate and possess the skills necessary to compete in the economy of the 21st century.

Safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools. Every school in America will be safe, disciplined and drug-free.

Teacher education and professional development. All teachers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prepare U.S. students for the next century.

Parental involvement. Every school will promote parental involvement in their children's education.

Conclusion

Together, these school improvement efforts—supported by Goals 2000—can help create a new ethic of learning in this country, and play a critical role in helping children reach challenging goals and standards. These efforts—geared to the needs of states and local communities—can support children's success in school, in the workplace, and as responsible citizens in our nation's democracy.

For additional information, call 1–800–USA–LEARN.

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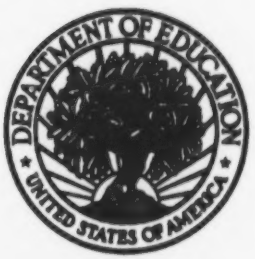

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